

# The Ofsted Education Inspection Framework – training for governors

## Session Objectives

- An outline of the key changes in the EIF
- Early feedback from schools – how does the new framework feel?
- The inspection in practice: before, during and after
- The governance descriptors
- The governors' role in inspection
- Case studies and governor experience
- What knowledge, understanding and evidence you need to shine in inspection
- Supporting your school through the process

The Essex Primary Heads' Association (EPHA) is run by primary heads for primary heads, supported by a Professional Officer.

EPHA aims to support all primary-phase headteachers (and schools leaders, including deputy heads and governors) in Essex - both in maintained schools and academies - in their leadership and management roles and to promote and improve primary education in the county, in collaboration with the Local Authority and other education partners.

EPHA can be contacted in the following ways:

**Pam Langmead**  
**Professional Officer**

pam@langmead.me.uk  
01621 786359/ 07791 143277  
3 Sheerwater Close,  
Burnham-on-Crouch,  
Essex, CM0 8EN

EPHA maintains an extensive website with resources and information:

[www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk](http://www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk)

## Ofsted inspection

### **Inspectors will consider the extent to which governors:**

- Are knowledgeable about their statutory duties and carry them out effectively
- Support and challenge the school's leaders effectively, using the best methods to assure themselves of the quality and impact of different aspects of the school's work
- Understand their role as the responsible body, where applicable, in considering and addressing leaders' workload and wellbeing
- Assure themselves that leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's context and are prioritising the actions for improvement that will have the greatest impact on pupils
- Ensure that systems for monitoring and quality assurance are fair, valid and constructive, and provide leaders and staff with high-quality feedback to inform continuous improvement
- Hold leaders to account appropriately and effectively for the impact of the school's professional learning programme for staff
- Hold leaders to account appropriately and effectively for the school's support and provision for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing

### **Page 74 - State-funded school inspection toolkit**

## Top tips for governors in Ofsted inspections

Governors are most effective in Ofsted when they are calm, consistent and evidence-focused, with a clear grasp of the school's strengths, weaknesses and next steps. The aim is to show inspectors that governance is strategic, evaluative and focused on pupils' outcomes and safeguarding.

### Know your story

- Be clear about the school's key strengths, priority areas for improvement and what has changed since the last inspection (curriculum, teaching, behaviour, leadership).
- Anchor everything in the school improvement plan and self-evaluation so governors tell a consistent narrative.

### Prepare the people, not just the papers

- Agree in advance who will meet inspectors (chair, vice, safeguarding, curriculum/SEND leads) and meet briefly beforehand to align key messages.
- Remind governors they can use notes and documents in the meeting; it is not a memory test, and it is better to refer to accurate information than guess.

### Focus on impact and evidence

- Prepare 5–6 concrete examples of how the board has challenged and supported leaders and what difference this has made (e.g. reading outcomes, attendance, SEND provision).
- Use meeting minutes, link governor reports, visit notes and monitoring schedules as evidence rather than describing work in general terms.

### Be strong on safeguarding

- Ensure all governors can explain safeguarding arrangements, how they gain assurance that policies work in practice, and how concerns or patterns are monitored and followed up.
- The safeguarding/link governor should be ready with recent visit reports, records of policy review and how training needs are identified.

## Understand funding and inclusion

- Be ready to explain how pupil premium, recovery funding and other grants are allocated, monitored and evaluated for impact on disadvantaged and SEND pupils.
- Show how the board tracks attendance, exclusions and behaviour trends, and how it challenges leaders where groups are not doing as well.

**Highlight, validate, celebrate** what is unique and special about your school

## Suggested information and evidence for governors

<b>SAFEGUARDING</b>	
<b>Statutory oversight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know who the DSL is (and deputy DSLs)</li> <li>• Ensure you know how you manage processes in relation to safeguarding concerns or allegations about the headteacher</li> <li>• Safeguarding Governor appointed and trained</li> <li>• Confirm the safeguarding policy is reviewed annually in line with local procedures</li> <li>• Know other related policies, such as Reasonable Force</li> <li>• Understand how staff are trained</li> <li>• Confirm governor training (new governors, regular updates)</li> </ul>
<b>Evidence of challenge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor minutes with reference to safeguarding</li> <li>• <i>Safeguarding Governor visit reports</i></li> <li>• <i>Safeguarding audit</i></li> </ul>
<b>SCR checks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know how the Single Central Record is monitored</li> <li>• Governor spot checks</li> </ul>
<b>Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know current safeguarding issues (not case by case, but main concern) <i>headteacher report</i></li> <li>• Be able to describe how you know safeguarding is <i>everyone's responsibility</i> (staff training, notices in school, recording and referrals)</li> <li>• Evidence that governors monitor adherence to referral processes, follow up action taken etc</li> <li>• How pupils are kept safe, and have trusted adults they can confide in</li> </ul>

<b>INCLUSION AND SEND</b>	
<b>SEND oversight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEN/Inclusion Governor appointed and trained</li> <li>• Know who the SENCo is and confirm they have appropriate authority, resources and capacity</li> <li>• Know the statutory responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act – <i>link this with inclusion in school</i></li> </ul>
<b>Evidence of challenge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor minutes with reference to SEND</li> <li>• SEND Governor visit reports</li> </ul>
<b>Funding accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to explain how Pupil Premium and SEND funding is allocated and how governors know it has an impact - <i>minutes of discussion, headteacher report, Pupil Premium statement</i></li> </ul>
<b>Vulnerable groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can describe how the school tracks the progress, attainment and attendance of disadvantaged, SEND, LAC/PLAC, and other vulnerable pupils</li> <li>• Specific question in governor monitoring template: "What are the barriers to learning and wellbeing for this pupil/group of pupils and what does the school do to</li> </ul>

	address these barriers?"
<b>Local strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the school work with the Local Authority on SEND Strategy?</li> <li>• <i>Inclusion Review report</i></li> </ul>

<b>CURRICULUM AND TEACHING</b>	
<b>Curriculum understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should be able to explain the broad aims of the curriculum (not the subject detail)</li> <li>• Awareness of curriculum content on the website</li> <li>• Governor links with SDP and subject leaders</li> <li>• <i>School curriculum aims policy or statement</i></li> <li>• <i>School Development Plan</i></li> <li>• <i>SEF</i></li> <li>• <i>SEP or external adviser reports</i></li> </ul>
<b>Evidence of challenge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of questions asked about the curriculum delivery, staff training, quality of teaching etc</li> <li>• <i>Minutes of meetings</i></li> <li>• <i>Governor monitoring visit reports</i></li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware that leaders check teaching quality and curriculum impact through learning walks, data, pupil progress meetings</li> </ul>

<b>ACHIEVEMENT</b>	
<b>Data knowledge and understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should know headline attainment and progress, including trends over time</li> <li>• Governors should know the key headlines in the IDSR (Inspection Data Summary Report)</li> <li>• <i>Headteacher's report</i></li> <li>• <i>SEP or external adviser reports</i></li> </ul>
<b>Evidence of challenge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging progress and attainment data</li> <li>• <i>Minutes of meetings, showing challenge</i></li> <li>• <i>Matters arising – following up questions through meetings and visits</i></li> <li>• <i>Governor monitoring visit reports</i></li> </ul>
<b>Gaps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to explain how gaps for SEND/disadvantaged/poor attenders are monitored and narrowing</li> <li>• Know about interventions and strategies that are used to address gaps</li> <li>• Show that governors have asked about the impact of strategies - <i>minutes</i></li> </ul>

<b>ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR</b>	
<b>Data knowledge and understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should know current attendance (whole school and groups) and how it compares to national, and trend over time</li> <li>• Governors should know how many</li> </ul>

	<p>suspensions/exclusions there have been, whether these are more prevalent for some groups (e.g. SEND)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Data around harmful sexual behaviour, behavioural incidents, filtering and monitoring</i></li> <li>• <i>Headteacher's report</i></li> </ul>
<b>Behaviour oversight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strategies are in place to improve poor behaviour</li> <li>• <i>Matters arising – following up questions through meetings and visits</i></li> <li>• <i>Governor monitoring visit reports</i></li> </ul>
<b>Bullying and discrimination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors must be able to describe how they know incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively</li> <li>• An understanding/knowledge of school policies and training</li> </ul>

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

<b>Wider offer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of enrichment opportunities, clubs, leadership roles</li> <li>• How participation is tracked by groups</li> </ul>
<b>RSHE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know that RSHE curriculum is statutory</li> <li>• Parent consultation has taken place</li> <li>• Policy has been agreed and published</li> </ul>
<b>Transition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should know about transition at key points: Reception to Year 1, infant to junior, primary to secondary</li> </ul>
<b>Pastoral support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should know how pupils access wellbeing and mental health support</li> </ul>

### EARLY YEARS

<b>GLD outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should know how the school's GLD (Good Level of Development) compares to national</li> </ul>
<b>Transition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should know about the transition into Early Years from pre-school, and the move from Reception to Year 1</li> </ul>
<b>Safeguarding in EYFS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident that EYFS children are safe, secure and supported in early learning</li> <li>• Understanding of staffing ratios</li> <li>• Staff know the changes to EY safeguarding in KCSiE 2025</li> </ul>

### POST-16 PROVISION

<b>Student outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should know how leaders are securing high-quality sixth form outcomes</li> <li>• How is the school/college supporting, improving and accrediting students' English and mathematics knowledge when necessary</li> </ul>
<b>SEND and disadvantaged</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the school/college identifying and tackling barriers for disadvantaged/ SEND/PLAC/LAC pupils</li> </ul>

<b>Future prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors should know how study programmes, including technical and vocational programmes, prepare students for the next stage of their education, training or employment</li> <li>• Knowing how the school/college offers high-quality, individualised careers advice and guidance that prepares students well for the future</li> </ul>
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<b>LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</b>	
<b>Statutory compliance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of statutory duties</li> <li>• Website compliance</li> <li>• Audits – safeguarding, health and safety, finance, personnel, premises compliance</li> <li>• Governor responsibility links</li> <li>• Statutory policies in place and up to date</li> <li>• Legal and effective governance structures and constitution</li> <li>• Delegation/decision planner</li> </ul>
<b>Evidence of challenge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of governor scrutiny on school improvement – <i>minutes, monitoring visit reports</i></li> </ul>
<b>Evidence of support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution to headteacher/principal well-being and support</li> <li>• Know your school: what is the ethos and vision for your school, what makes it special</li> </ul>
<b>Effective governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective governance structure</li> <li>• Governor training and development</li> <li>• <i>Records of governor training and development relevant to leadership, inclusion, and governance responsibilities, including specific areas such as complaints, exclusions, safeguarding etc</i></li> <li>• Skills audits</li> <li>• Recruitment, retention and support for governors</li> <li>• Professional clerking and governance support</li> <li>• Access to advice and training</li> </ul>

## **Extract from School inspection operating guide for inspectors**

### **Engaging with those responsible for governance**

Meet those responsible for governance, on a call if necessary. Consider the school's context and, where applicable, the scheme of delegation when deciding who to speak with.

Explore how governors/trustees carry out their functions – particularly in shaping and supporting the school's vision, ethos, and strategic direction – and the impact this has on day-to-day decisions.

Consider whether the way they support and challenge leaders helps the school to provide a high-quality education for pupils.

Consider how effective processes and policies are. Explore how governors/trustees assure themselves that these are understood and effectively implemented across the school.

In a maintained school, it will be the school's board of governors. If the school is part of a federation, evaluate how this affects the individual school. If an IEB is in place, establish how its members are taking responsibility for all governance.

In an academy, the board of trustees is responsible for governance. Where a trust has employed a governance professional, you must also meet them. These meetings should usually take place without the school and trust leaders present, unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been discussed with you. If the CEO is also a trustee, you need to decide whether the meeting with trustees should take place without the CEO being present. When making this decision, you should consider the context of the trust, its structure and the responsibilities trustees hold. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the CEO to be present.

Where multi-academy trusts have local governing bodies (LGBs), also known as academy committees, you must:

- establish who has overall responsibility for governance and make sure that inspection activities and the report card accurately reflect who is responsible for what
- establish whether the trust has delegated any specific responsibilities or whether the LGBs are purely advisory bodies
- be aware that the powers of an LGB are sometimes delegated from trust leaders; this makes the LGB part of the school's management, not its governance

If the LGB does not hold responsibility for any areas relevant to inspectors' evidence collection under the evaluation areas of the toolkit, then it is not necessary to speak with them.

### **Engaging with the trust executive**

Refer to the Scheme of Delegation and speak with leaders to identify the correct individuals to meet in the academy and the trust.

During the inspection, central trust staff may be present in the school. This may be, for example, to release school staff to meet inspectors, to join learning walks or as part of their usual work in school. It is important that you establish why they are present, if they are known to pupils, and if they understand the school's day-to-day business.

Where possible, always meet the CEO or their delegate. CEOs may want other senior trust leaders to be present to provide support in these meetings, especially in large trusts.

Where trust-wide policies are in place, you should focus only on their impact on the academy you are inspecting.

The trust leaders you need to speak with may be those who have delegated responsibility. Where trusts are large, this may be more than one person.

Establish how all leaders make sure delegated responsibilities are carried out effectively, including how leaders assure themselves that systems are working as intended.

## **When can schools expect their next inspection?**

Transcript of the Ofsted webinar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWpLxXTErzs>

### **Currently 'good' or 'outstanding' schools**

The likely scenario for the vast majority of currently 'good' or 'outstanding' state-funded schools.

Where relevant, the webinar has broken each slide down to reference those schools inspected before September 2024 who have an overall effectiveness judgement, as well as those inspected since September 2024 who do not have an overall effectiveness judgement.

In all circumstances, on this slide, 'good' or 'outstanding' schools will likely be inspected around 4 years after the publication of their last inspection report, whether that was a graded or an ungraded inspection. For example, if your school's report was published summer 2025, your next full inspection is likely to be around summer 2029.

### **Currently 'requires improvement' schools**

If your school has an overall effectiveness judgement of 'requires improvement', a full inspection is likely within 2 and a half years from the publication of your most recent inspection report. It is important to note that you will not typically receive a monitoring inspection before your next full inspection under the renewed education inspection framework. For example, if your school had a graded inspection with an overall effectiveness judgement of 'requires improvement' and the report was published in spring 2024, your next graded inspection is likely to be autumn 2026. Or if your school received a graded inspection and was judged 'requires improvement' for quality of education and the report was published in spring 2024, your next graded inspection is likely to be autumn 2026.

### **Schools that last had an ungraded inspection and so remained 'good' or 'outstanding'**

What about those schools who received an ungraded inspection and remained 'good', but with an indication that they might be improving?

These schools will receive a full inspection within 4 years of the publication of their most recent inspection report. For example, if your school received an ungraded inspection that concluded that your school's work may have improved significantly and the report was published in summer 2025, the next full inspection is likely to be summer 2029.

What about those schools who received an ungraded inspection and remain 'good', but with an indication that they might be declining?

These schools will receive a full inspection within 2 and a half years of the publication of their most recent inspection report. It is important to note that

these schools will not typically receive a monitoring inspection before their next full inspection.

For example, if your school received an ungraded inspection that concluded that your school's grade may not be as high and the report was published in spring 2024, your next full inspection is likely to be autumn 2026.

Schools judged to have serious weaknesses or to require special measures

If, during your most recent inspection, your school was judged to have serious weaknesses or require special measures, you may be in a monitoring program. This may have already started and you may have already had one or more monitoring inspections. These routine monitoring inspections will continue from January 2026. You may be ready for a full inspection to remove you from a category of concern. If this is the case and we receive a request from you to the relevant Ofsted regional director, we will schedule an inspection based on the timescales above or sooner.

### **New or previously exempt schools**

Your school may be classed as a new school. These are schools that have never been inspected under their current unique reference number or URN. Your school will be inspected in its third year of operation, not necessarily 3 years from opening. For example, if it opened in the 2025/26 academic year, your full inspection is likely to be in the 2027/28 academic year. If you were a previously exempt school, that is you received an overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding prior to November 2020, and you have not as yet had a graded inspection, it is likely that you'll be inspected under the renewed framework by the end of July 2026.

### **Maintained nursery schools**

In maintained nursery schools, a full inspection is likely within 4 years of publication of the most recent inspection report. In our pilots this term, we noticed that it was more difficult to evaluate impact during the autumn term, especially when most children were 3- and 4-year-olds who had only recently started. So going forward, we'll be scheduling inspections for these settings in the spring and summer terms only when there's more evidence of progress across the curriculum over time.

### **Non-association independent schools**

If you are a non-association independent school, the timeframes are a little more straightforward. 'Good' and 'outstanding' schools will receive their next standard inspection within 3 years of their last inspection. 'Requires improvement' and 'inadequate' schools will receive their next standard inspection within 2 years. New schools will receive their first standard inspection within one year of opening.

## Resources and references

[Inspection information for state-funded schools: for use from November 2025](#)

[School inspection operating guide for inspectors: for use from November 2025](#)

[State funded school inspection toolkit](#)

Also for reference, if applicable:

[School monitoring operating guide for inspectors: for use from November 2025](#)

GovernorHub and Ofsted webinar: What does the new Ofsted 2025 framework mean for you and your board?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2j1trXuSlwM>

Ofsted webinar – when can schools expect their next inspection

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWpLxXTErzs>

[Special educational needs \(SEN\) and disabilities: guidance for school governing boards](#)